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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Annual Awards Ceremony

18 September 1970

Address by Mr. Richard Helms

Director of Central Intelligence

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In honoring all of you -- and I believe the number this year came to some 1,577 in the 20, 15 and 10 year categories -- it reminds one that the whole Agency is getting older. The 23d birthday in itself is not so significant, but it reminds us that, even with the large number of retirees who have departed this year, there are many still behind them, and the center of gravity of the Agency tends obviously to get older with the passage of time. On the other hand, early retirement and the understanding of some of us older ones that we have got to move along and keep the center of gravity from moving too far up in years is permitting, I think, a decent balance in the Agency. For those of the younger group who feel that there is not any motion and the prospects are limited, I would say just the contrary is the case and that in this Agency the chances of advancement are better than in any other agency of government of which I am aware. In making such a sweeping statement, I recognize there are certain groups that get grafted on to government from time to time to do special jobs that may last for 5 or 10 years and then go out of business. I am not talking about them; I am talking about those agencies that have a reasonable permanence.

I suppose that on the 23d birthday one should look at some of the pluses and minuses. On the plus side, there is no doubt that, as we have said in the last couple of years at these ceremonies, the Agency has come of age and has reached its place in the Washington community -- the Washington bureaucracy, if you like. In addition, there is no question in my mind that the Agency is remarkable for two things. First, it is one of the best disciplined organizations I suppose the government has ever seen, and its discipline is almost entirely self-imposed. Second, I do not think this Agency in the year 1970 bows to any other in the quality and calibre of the people who are associated with it.

Now both of these things are vitally important in my opinion, particularly in the work in which we are involved.

The discipline has derived almost entirely from the intelligence, the good sense, and, if you want to put it this way, the wisdom of the individual CIA employee. There is not a soul in this room who does not recognize that the discipline of oneself is the most difficult of all disciplines. I am equally sure there is not one of you who does not realize that it is the only one that makes any sense. There are other devices which have been used through the years, and are still in use, to inculcate discipline in various types of organizations -- military services, police forces, law enforcement agencies, various other organizations.

But, I do not think there is a single general who ever commanded troops who would not be the first to say that if those troops in and of themselves are self-disciplined, his problem is minimal. It is when this discipline has to be exercised from above with an iron hand that the problems loom large. The general may come out successfully but he

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has had a tough time of it.

This is not true in this organization and I think it is one of the most remarkable things about it. We have people disposed all over the world and it rarely occurs to me to wonder whether some individual in, say, Ouagodougou, is going to carry out his instructions. I not only assume it, but in 99 percent of the cases -- maybe 99.44 percent -- this is true. That is remarkable. Those individuals far from Washington know that they can goof off; that they can do a whole lot of things that they will rarely be caught at. There is no device for checking this. If we were to set up an inspectors corps that spends its time trying to catch people in minor infractions of rules and regulations, we not only would waste a lot of time and money but we would prevent a lot of good work from getting done.

But I want to leave with you and with those who are not in the room that this is the way we regard discipline in the CIA; that it is not taken for granted in the sense that we are cavalier about it, but it is taken for granted in the sense that we have come to expect it. There is no other way to run the organization.

As far as the quality of our people is concerned, I do not think there is one of you who does not agree with me about this. You leave yourself aside, obviously out of sensible humility; but you look around at others and it is pretty hard to find in Washington or in any large corporation the brains, honest dedication, and devotion to duty of this particular organization. It is worth pondering and it is certainly worth keeping.

On the negative side, one of the problems of age is that an organization is inclined to develop a certain amount of staleness: a certain amount of humdrum quality; a desire to keep doing things the way they were done last year because it is easier that way; a facility for turning the crank over and over and over again because it is easier to turn the crank to the right than it is to turn it to the left because you have gotten used to doing it that way. These are things I think we should pay some attention to. What staleness creates is, simply, fixed attitudes -- a laziness about challenging your own assumptions or really looking hard at a problem in order to find a new and better way of doing a task which you have had to do perhaps a hundred times. But I can not believe that the people of intelligence we have here do not have built into them the resources which would permit an avoidance of this kind of staleness; resources which generate a feeling in the morning that when we shave or powder our noses, whichever the case may be, that today we are going to find some new and different and better way to do something that we have been doing as a matter of routine for weeks and months.

I do not think either that there is any time when we ought to be complacent about the ability of the human being, each of us in turn, to

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develop certain convictions, certain notions, and certain conceptions, and then stick to them through thick and thin. The experts in this Agency, and they are validly called experts, have an inclination to make some pretty firm judgments based on the long period of time they have spent dealing with the material. This is not in itself bad. The only trouble is that the world does change, new things do develop, new things do happen, and old attitudes are not necessarily going to deal with new situations. I think it would be very healthy if each and every one of us challenged within ourselves some of our conceptions and convictions, re-examined the evidence to see if we are indeed all that accurate, and faced up to the fact that we as an organization have a lot of questions that are left unanswered, particularly about the Soviet Union and Communist China.

We have got a lot of work to do in these two areas if in no others. We have had a mixed record in the area of Soviet intentions; therefore, I am not all that comfortable about our understanding of what the Soviet leaders are up to a good deal of the time. So I do not think that we have any cause to be complacent, or to go around town saying that we are the only ones who have the answers.

Now I do not want to dwell on this and there is no sense in beating this horse to death. But I do want to leave with you the thought that, if we are going to continue to advance and continue to maintain the high standards which the Agency has established for itself, we are going to have to rethink some of these problems, and we are going to have to be a bit more aggressive in our own attitudes.

When I spoke here on the 19th of June in what we referred to then as the State of the Agency message, I had planned to answer questions from the audience but was prevented from doing so by being called downtown to see the President. So I would like to answer questions today. Since there are obviously other people around and about who would like to have a crack at this, we will try and set up another such meeting at some reasonable time. For the next 30 minutes or so I would be glad to answer questions from the floor. If those of you who have questions will speak up, I will repeat them. In the interest of sanity, let us keep the questions short. In other words, let us not have a speech to which you want my response.

Who has the first question?

Question: With the influx of Russians into Egypt and Africa, are we increasing our language support so that we can send more qualified linguists into these areas?

Answer: I would assume that we have not changed our language training program on the basis of this development. And I would think that the reason for this is probably a relatively simple one; that is, we are

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having an uphill battle as it is to keep up with our language requirements and I believe that as far as Russian language studies are concerned, we have as many people doing this now as we think we can afford. I grant you that those who are involved in planning language studies lock horns very readily with those who are not over the number of people and the amount of emphasis that we should put on language training. I frankly believe that we are not doing enough, but I am pragmatic enough to realize that we have got to keep operating while language and other kinds of training are going on -- the demands on us have been pretty heavy here of late. As far as I am concerned I am solidly behind language training, and I feel that we could push it harder and intend to look in that direction.

Question: Would you care to comment on the implications of the FitzHugh Report on the intelligence community?

Answer: First off, let us be sure we are all talking about the same thing. Mr. FitzHugh was the chairman of what was known as the Blue Ribbon Review Panel which was appointed by President Nixon and Secretary Laird to review the organization of the Department of Defense. There is a secret intelligence annex to that report which deals with the Defense Intelligence agencies, such as DIA, NSA, and so forth. I do not think that it would be very useful for me to try to get into what the recommendations in the report were because it will only be important if they are carried out. The FitzHugh Report, you must remember, is a report of an outside group and it does make a number of rather specific recommendations. How many of them the Secretary of Defense is going to accept is another question, and I think we ought simply to wait and see which recommendations are going to be followed. The recommendations concerning intelligence were not of a type that were unanticipated. Let us just live with it and see what comes over the horizon. We could spend an awful lot of time boxing the compass on the right way to organize the intelligence community and I do not think this is the time and place for it.

Question: What will be the impact on the Agency over the next several years of the austerity program existing in the government now?

Answer: We have been involved in tough budgets here for the last two years and I can only anticipate that it is going to get even tougher. What one reads in the newspapers about the plight of the federal budget is all one needs to recognize what the President is up against. On the one side are the pressures from those who believe that we are not spending enough federal money on domestic problems, such as the ghettos, poverty, hunger, health, education, and so on. On the other side are those who feel strongly that we must not dismantle our defense establishment, that the United States stands across from the Soviet Union which is building apace a substantial establishment -- certainly good enough and strong enough to stand off what the United States has -- and that if one

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continues to dismantle one's commitments and one's defenses, then one's diplomatic credibility will be affected and will in the end reduce the United States to a second rate power.

Now I come back to your question. We are going to be cut and one of the ways to cut any federal agency these days is to give it next year the same amount of money it had this year. The rise in costs simply makes it more expensive to operate and therefore you take a cut right then and there if you stand still in actual dollar amounts. I think it probably will be worse than that. We are busy in the Agency right now to see what we can do to live on less. As you all know, there has been some reduction each year in the last five in the total number of people we have in the Agency. This reduction is going to continue. We can do that through recruiting fewer people, through retirement, through attrition -- various ways. We can meet these figures without in the end causing too much anguish, although there are going to be places where we are going to have to ask people to leave; and that inevitably involves some unpleasantness. But there is no way out of it.

Looking at this quite coldly, I would hope that we could continue to have enough money to do the important and the basic jobs that we have in our mission. We are going to have to be leaner, and we are going to have to be more efficient and work more effectively. But I think we can stand that. I would like to ask all of you a question. When you enter the door of the building in the morning, at whatever hour it may be, and you leave after the required amount of time later in the day, have you really put out during that period as hard as you might have? I think when one asks the question that way there are very few of us who would say that we have really worked flat out all day long -- that there had not been quite a few diversions along the way which might have been put to better use. And I think that if you consult your consciences you would recognize that you probably are capable of more output than you have produced, let us say, in the last 3 or 4 days. Whether you are prepared to put it out or not, I do not know, but I am inclined to think that you are if it is required. I am never a pessimist about these things. I have worked around this Agency too long. I have seen what we can do when there is really a reason for doing it -- in a crisis, a push, we produce -- without any argument about it. I assume it is still that way.

I think we can live with what we have, or, getting a little bit leaner, still do a good and effective job. After all, what is the use in acquiring experience and expertise and knowledge if you can not do a good job better, faster, and more effectively? If we needed "x"-number of people ten years ago, do we need the same "x"-number of people ten years later? I rather doubt it. And I for one am not interested in expanding our mission or taking on more jobs than we already have. I am concerned about our doing the jobs we have now <u>better</u>, not taking on <u>additional</u> ones. I am not interested in having a large bureaucracy

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around here which is hard to administer, which involves more and more people in support, which simply gets us involved in other fields when I do not think we are up to snuff in some of the fields we are already in. This has been a long answer to a budgetary question but it gave me an opportunity to get some of these things off my chest.

Allow me to end here by saying that I very much appreciate, and I know that General Cushman and the Deputy Directors very much appreciate, the support that you have given us in the year past. There is no sense in getting maudlin about these things, but I do have a very strong feeling about human relationships. With the pressures on all of us, there is too little time for amenities and the personal touch in the expression of appreciation among all of us involved in the common job. So, this is my opportunity to thank you for the support you have given me. I, you realize, am frequently a "Charlie McCarthy." I simply go to meetings and I say what you ladies and gentlemen have told me to say. I will confess that I normally read it first. But by and large I have little reason to cavil with what is presented to me -- either with the speed or the efficiency with which it is done.

Also, I must say that these are peculiarly difficult times in the world. Not only is human life involved with violence, drugs, and the peculiarities of human behavior; but also the relationships in the world are in a very peculiar state of disarray. It is therefore, a time in which intelligence as such is challenged more than it ever has been. Oddly, this is happening at the same time that intelligence has become more important to this government than it ever has been. To cite one particular instance, if it is possible for the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate a strategic arms limitation agreement, we are the ones who are going to have to verify that agreement, and it is our ability to do this that will make the agreement possible. I do not know how many of you have thought about it in precisely those terms, but that is where it stands. And, therefore, intelligence is going to have to play a role which to the best of my knowledge it has never played in the United States government before.

Strangely enough, Presidents particularly, since they are extraordinarily busy men and are subjected to so many differing kinds of pressures, usually turn to those devices that they need and almost everything else gets pretty well pushed aside. I am not sure they would like to hear me say this, but that is the truth of the matter. They are not very interested in intelligence for its own sake. They are interested in it when it is something they need and is an essential tool for them to do their jobs. There are periods wherein one is asked, "Well, is the President paying attention to what you are sending him?" and the answer is, "I do not know." But you can certainly tell when he is paying attention to it because then the requests start to come through and the tempo of action is different. I have made my peace with this, using the old adage, "You can lead a horse to water but you can not make him

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drink" -- you can send intelligence to a President but you can not make him read it, you can not make him understand it, and you can not force feed him. Attempting to do that simply ruins your welcome. But when he needs it, he is all for it and wants it in quantity; and I have watched this now in three Presidents. In this particular and peculiar time, President Nixon wants it badly. He wants the best we can get on the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian problem. He wants the best we can get on the Middle East. He wants the best we can get on the Soviet Union and the possibilities of verifying the treaty of the kind that I have just mentioned. So, there is a vast amount of work to be done in the weeks and months ahead, and it is going to be reviewed even more critically than it has been reviewed in the past.

As you leave the auditorium today, I wish you would take with you the thought that I particularly am most appreciative of your efforts. I would like to underline again that I think we could all review some of our ideas and conceptions and see if we can find some better ways to do our job. Last but not least, I would like to extend congratulations to all of us for having survived 23 years, and I would think that at the rate we are going we might survive for 23 more. And I can only tell you that in 1947 when the Agency was founded, there were not too many of us around who were prepared to predict that we would survive 23 years.

Thank you.

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